AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the

application:

LISTING OF CLAIMS:

Claims 1-2 (Canceled)

12. (Currently Amended) A method for signaling failures in a ring network comprising a

plurality of network elements and a plurality of fiber spans connecting the network elements in a

ring configuration such that one network element is connected via said fiber spans to an adjacent

network element on a west side and to another adjacent network element on an east side, the

fiber spans comprising incoming and exiting working channels on each side of said one network

element for carrying information traffic and incoming and exiting protecting channels on each

side of said one network element for protecting said information traffic, the method comprising

the steps of

detecting a failure affecting incoming and working protection channels on the east

side of said one network element,

transmitting from the west side of said network element an indication of a

performed ring switch for protecting information traffic over said failed working channel

on the east side,

receiving aan external command for requesting suppression of said ring switch;

maintaining said performed ring switch; and

transmitting from said west side an indication of said performed ring switch and of said external command.

13. (Previously Presented) A method according to claim 12, wherein said indication of a performed ring switch comprises a four-bit Bridge Request Code field, characterized in that the step of sending said indication of a performed ring switch comprises the step of sending protection words comprising an all zeros combination in said Bridge Request Code field.

Claims 14-22 (Canceled)

23. (Currently Amended) A method for managing a protection mechanism in a ring network, wherein a network element is connected to an adjacent network element on a west side and to another adjacent network element on an east side, each side including incoming and exiting working channels for carrying information traffic and including incoming and exiting protection channels for protecting said information traffic, the method including the steps of:

detecting a failure affecting incoming working and protection channels on the east side of said network element;

transmitting from the west side of said network element an indication of a performed ring switch for protecting information traffic over said failed working channel on the east side;

receiving aan external command for requesting suppression of said ring switch;

maintaining said performed ring switch; and

transmitting from said west side an indication of said performed ring switch and

of said external command.

24. (Previously Presented) A method according to claim 23, further including the steps

of:

receiving said indication at said adjacent network element;

in case of detecting another failure affecting incoming working and protection

channels on the west side of said adjacent network element, maintaining said performed

ring switch, otherwise suppressing said ring switch.

25. (Previously Presented) A method according to claim 24, further including the step of:

in case of detecting said other failure, transmitting from the east side of said

adjacent network element another indication of said performed ring switch, otherwise

transmitting another indication for requesting suppression of said ring switch.

26. (Previously Presented) A method according to claim 23, wherein said indication is

carried over a Multiplex Section of Synchronous Digital Hierarchy or a Synchronous Optical

Network of an exiting protection channel on the west side of said network element, said

Multiplex Section including a first field for indicating said performed ring switch and including a

second field for indicating said external command.

27. (Previously Presented) A method according to claim 26, wherein said first field is a Status field of a K2 byte and said second field is Bridge Request code field of the K2 byte, said Status field being assigned to binary value "0000" and said Bridge Request code field being assigned to binary value "010".